

## Sullivan County NH

**Type of Meeting:**

**Sullivan County Full Delegation**

**Date / Time:**

**15 October / 9:30 am**

**Place:**

**Newport County Complex—Jury Assembly Room**

### **Participants:**

Representatives: Peter Franklin (Chair), Ellen Nielsen (Clerk), John Cloutier, Larry Converse, Brenda Ferland, Sue Gottling, Arthur Jillette, Beverly Rodeschin and Carla Skinder

Commissioners: Ethel Jarvis

Other Elected Officials: High Sheriff Michael Prozzo, Registrar of Deeds Sharron King

County Employees: County Administrator Greg Chanis, Nursing Home Manager Ted Purdy, Superintendent of Corrections Ross Cunningham,

Public Participant: Claremont City Councilor Jeffrey Goff

Public Observers: Rose Vinci, Chris Vinci, Brandy Tatem, Brady Miles, Jon Rose, Kristen Senz

Press: Jim Kenyon, *Valley News*, Ben Bulkeley, *Eagle-Times* and A. Coven and Joel Wade of WMUR TV.

The meeting was called to order by Rep. Franklin at 9:30 am.

### **Approval of Minutes:**

Copies of the corrected draft minutes of the delegation meeting of 14 August 2008 and draft minutes of the delegation meeting of 15 September 2008 were provided for the delegation to review.

**Rep Gottling moved that the corrected draft minutes of 14 August be approved and Rep. Converse seconded the motion, which carried 9-0 by a unanimous voice vote.**

**Rep Converse moved that the minutes of 15 September be approved and Rep. Skinder seconded the motion, which carried 9-0 by a unanimous voice vote.**

### **Public Participation:**

Claremont City Councilman Jeffrey Goff read a prepared statement about mileage payments made to Rep. Franklin for travel to and from Concord, which he said he considered to be excessive. He asked Rep. Franklin to respond. Rep. Franklin said that he would not respond at this time, but he would prepare a statement regarding his mileage payments. Mr. Goff passed out a spreadsheet showing how many trips to Concord each representative had made and how much mileage reimbursement had been paid to each. Mr. Goff's remarks were filmed by a TV cameraman. After making his remarks, Mr. Goff left the jury assembly room, followed by the reporter and cameraman from WMUR TV.

### **Policy regarding Transfer of Funds within Departments:**

In Fiscal Year 2008, the delegation passed a resolution which required EFC or delegation approval, during that fiscal year, if transfers from one line item to another within departments exceeded \$5000, or if such transfers happened more than once. Rep. Franklin asked the delegation to consider passing a similar resolution for FY 2009.

**Rep. Gottling moved that the 2008 resolution be amended by substituting "2009" for "2008" wherever it appears. Rep. Converse seconded the motion.**

Discussion followed. Rep. Rodeschin wanted to know if this would mean that in practice, the delegation would have to approve all transfers from one line item to another. Rep. Franklin said that the resolution did not require such approval but that sometimes transfers smaller than that were presented for approval because there were a number of small transfers that, in aggregate, amounted to more than \$5000. Mr. Chanis said that because some department heads found the wording of the resolution confusing, they routinely submitted all transfers to scrutiny by the EFC or the delegation. Rep. Ferland said that she had not voted for the resolution in FY 2008

and would not vote for it in FY 2009 because it was micro-management. Rep. Franklin said the resolution was needed to insure transparency and accuracy in financial reporting. Rep. Skinder and Rep. Rodeschin also said the resolution was micro-management. Rep. Nielsen suggested that since the trust level of the relationship between county administration and the delegation had improved over the last fiscal year, the EFC should meet with Mr. Chanis to figure out the wording for a less burdensome resolution. Rep. Gottling said that we needed to keep a policy in place to provide timely explanations of transfers of funds within departments.

**Rep. Rodeschin moved the question. The motion to move the question failed 5-4 by a division (show of hands) vote.**

**Rep. Cloutier moved to amend Rep. Gottling's resolution by striking the clause about requiring the EFC / delegation to approve transfers less than \$5000 within departments if one transfer of more than \$5000 has already occurred. Rep. Nielsen seconded the motion to amend the resolution.**

Discussion followed: Rep. Gottling said that she could accept the amendment to her resolution. Rep. Rodeschin said that she would not vote for the amended resolution because it still was micro-management. Rep. Franklin quoted President Reagan's comment on arms treaty verification: "Trust but verify!" Rep. Franklin asked if there were others who wished to speak, and seeing no hands raised, asked for a vote by show of hands on Rep. Cloutier's amendment to the resolution.

**The motion to amend the resolution carried 5-4 by a division (show of hands) vote.**

The amended motion now read as follows:

**All funds appropriated for all line items in the 2009 fiscal year Sullivan County budget shall be non-transferable without prior approval of the Executive finance committee or the full County Convention in accordance with RSA 24:14. The one exception is that the commissioners are authorized to transfer funds within a department from one line item to another in the amount not to exceed \$5000. Each and every transfer shall be reported to the Executive Finance committee within a week of the transfer. The transfer information shall include the purpose of the transfer, the line item from which the money came, and the line item to which the money will go.**

**The positions listed in the 2009 county budget constitute the authorized positions for fiscal year 2009. No new positions may be created without approval of the Executive Finance Committee or the full County Convention.**

**The resolution, as amended, passed 6-3, with representatives voting as follows:**

**YES: Cloutier, Converse, Franklin, Gottling, Jillette and Nielsen NO: Ferland, Skinder and Rodeschin.**

#### **Review of Fiscal 2009 Budget:**

The delegation heard reports from Ted Purdy, the director of the nursing home, and Ross Cunningham, the superintendent of the Department of Corrections.

Mr. Purdy stated that the average daily census at the nursing home has been lower than budgeted for—130.8 patients—and this has resulted in a shortfall of about \$74,000 in projected revenue from the nursing home. Mr. Purdy also explained the measures the nursing home is taking to lower costs by reducing dependency on agency nursing. The goals of these measures include improved recruitment of full-time and part-time staff and improved retention of staff, along with greater collaboration with the staff and the union.

Mr. Cunningham said that so far the expenses of his department have been in line with the projections in the 2009 budget and that he hopes to end the year with a surplus. However, he is concerned about more than anticipated increases in the cost of transportation and heating fuel.

Rep. Nielsen asked for a progress report on the capital improvements which were approved by the delegation in the process of revising the 2009 budget. Mr. Cunningham said that plans for improving the lighting had been completed, and the electrician who is employed by the county would be able to do the work for less than had been anticipated because some parts of the old system can be used. As for the improvements to the recreation yards, the work had been put out to bid, and a low bid had been accepted. However, because of the rapidly increasing cost of items such as concertina wire, the project will have to be scaled back in ways that do not affect basic safety issues. The new security system has been put out to bid.

Rep. Converse asked a question about pay raises for corrections officers which had been proposed by Mr. Cunningham and approved by the Commissioners. Mr. Cunningham said that the Sullivan county pay scale was lower than that of neighboring NH counties and Vermont, and that if this disparity is not addressed, the county would lose experienced and trained staff. He noted that new hires have to be trained for four weeks at the corrections academy in Concord. The proposed pay raises were for mostly for entry level officers, and since there is not a step system within corrections officer pay grades, the raises would not have the effect of increasing all salaries in the department.

**Approval of Purchase of Software for the Office of the Registrar of Deeds:**

During the 2007 session, the General Court passed a law creating a surcharge on fees for transfers of property paid to the Registrars of Deeds in order to permanently fund the LCHIP program. The legislation included a state grant of \$5000 to each county to be used for the computer upgrades or software needed to compute the surcharge. Sullivan County has received a check from the State Treasurer and has set up a separate bank account to hold this money. Expenditure of the money, even though it is not part of the county budget, requires approval from the delegation.

**Rep. Nielsen moved that the delegation approve the expenditure, Rep. Skinder seconded the motion, and Rep. Rodeschin moved the question. The motion carried 8-0 by a voice vote (Rep. Ferland had left the meeting.)**

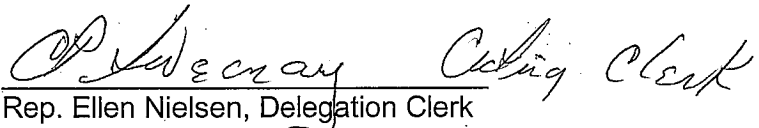
**Next Meeting and Adjournment:**

Without objection, the date and time for the next (and last) meeting of this full delegation was set for Monday, November 17 at 9:30 am and Rep. Franklin declared the meeting adjourned.

**Next Steps:**

Members of the delegation are invited to attend a special commissioners' meeting for the FY 2008 County audit exit interview on Thursday, October 23rd from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm at the Sugar River Bank Community Room, 10 North Main Street in Newport.

Respectfully Submitted



Rep. Ellen Nielsen, Delegation Clerk